

# BEIJING TODAY METRO

今日北京

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## Spirit of the city

Spring Festival 2014 begins at the end of this month. The celebration is a yearly chance to parade the best of Chinese traditional culture.

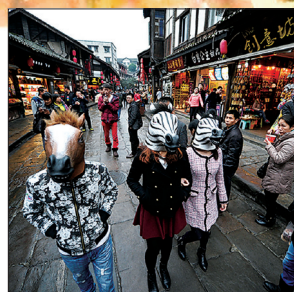
In the run up to the big day, two local galleries are showcasing the art of Ma Haifang (seen left) and Cao Jinping, two artists whose works truly capture the spirit of Old Beijing and the capital's fading local culture.

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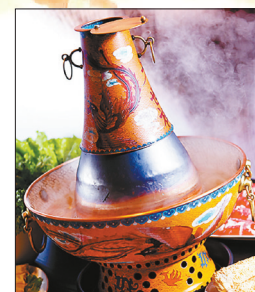
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# Flops fail to discourage new restaurants from going abroad

By ZHAO HONGYI  
Beijing Today Staff

Three years ago, the Tianjin-owned Goubuli steamed bun chain attempted to go abroad. More privately-owned Chinese restaurants like Huajia Yiyuan and Meizhou Dongpo have followed, opening their own chain stores abroad.

But an investigation by the *Beijing Youth Daily* found that aside from Tianjin Goubuli, most of these Chinese restaurants have flopped in their foreign ventures.

## Exporting cuisine

Chinese restaurants have gone abroad in three waves, said Bian Jiang, vice chairman of the Chinese Cuisine Association.

The first wave of Chinese restaurants entered Europe and the US about 190 years ago during the Qing Dynasty. Most of these restaurants were opened by emigrants from the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian.

These Chinese restaurants survived for generations and were most foreigners' first encounter with Chinese cuisine.

A second wave came in the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping called on the country to open. The restaurants that headed abroad in this wave were state-owned chains such as the roast duck restaurant Quanjude and Muslim restaurant Donglaishun.

But 30 years later, nearly all of these state-owned restaurants have shuttered their foreign outlets. Most failed to make a name for themselves in the local market, chose poor locations or were generally unable to manage a business without the government's direct support.

In 2003, Quanjude had five restaurants in the US, Germany, Myanmar, Hong Kong



Meizhou Dongpo opened its first foreign location in Beverly Hills last month.

BQB Photo

and Oman. In 2013, it had one in Myanmar, one in Australia and two in Japan.

"Most of the employees we sent abroad ran away. The business disputes have dragged on for more than a decade," said a Quanjude manager who refused to be named.

## Chains in the new century

A third wave began in the early 2000s, led by Huajia Yiyuan's opening of a restaurant in Seoul. The chain is in talks with its Italian partners to open another outlet in Europe.

Last December, Meizhou Dongpo opened its first overseas restaurant in the US.

The chain held a lavish opening ceremony with brushes, poetry and bamboo to

cut the ribbon on the first Meizhou Dongpo restaurant in Westfield, Beverly Hills, in December.

"The Song Dynasty decoration gives the location a more authentic Chinese feel," Zhou Miao, the general manager, said.

The 400-square-meter restaurant serves simple Chinese dishes, unlike the formal banquets it offers back home. It can serve as many as 109 customers at once and employs 70 waiters, all of whom are local residents.

The restaurant selected the US for its first location due to the country's general tolerance of foreign cultures, Bian said.

The restaurant offers Dongpo Roast Duck, Dongpo Sausage, Boston Lobster

Hotpot, Dongpo Boiled Elbow, Yiping Dongpo Pork, Tangjian Snow Beef and Dandan Noodles.

The dishes combine Sichuan cooking styles with local seafood. Most customers spend about \$30, a higher price per plate than what the chain sells in China.

But the search for a way to balance business operations is ongoing.

"Several days ago, director John Woo Yu-Sen and Zhang Yong, the president of Haidilao, came to our restaurant to taste the dishes and learn about our operation," Zhou Miao said.

## Bright future?

Two areas where Chinese restaurants come up short is in investigating and adapting to the local market and hiring competent management.

Other problems involve an inability to calculate suitable prices and comply with local labor and food safety laws, Bian said.

The Ministry of Commerce has promised to provide support, such as loans and commercial advertisements, to Chinese restaurants going abroad.

The ministry said it would open overseas development centers for these restaurants to provide legal and business consulting.

"Frankly speaking, after the three waves of going abroad, Chinese restaurants should have sufficient market reputation, financial capability and management teams," Bian said.

"Fortunately, following the growing strength of China and its strength abroad, more people are recognizing Chinese restaurants in foreign countries. This round of going abroad may be less likely to fail than the last," he said.

# Gov to rein in water use with tiered pricing

By ZHAO HONGYI  
Beijing Today Staff

The National Development & Reform Commission and Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development recently issued a notice ordering water companies throughout the country to adopt tiered water pricing for individuals and institutions.

The new pricing system will take effect at the end of 2015. The proposed pricing ratio is 1:1.5:3, though areas suffering from drought may further penalize heavy users, it said.

All homes must be fitted with a water meter to calculate water consumption, it said.

Nearly 30 percent of rural families are equipped to adopt the price system, as are half of the provincial capitals and cities.

Beijing will begin receiving water from the Danjiangkou Reservoir in Hubei Province this October. The price of the water is expected to spike at that time.

In 2009, water prices in Beijing were raised by 0.9 yuan per cubic meter, 0.48 yuan of which was for the water and 0.42 yuan for waste water treatment. The last increase was in 2011, when the price rose 0.3 yuan.

The current water price in Beijing is 4 yuan per cubic meter cubic. Sources say the water pumped from Hubei will cost 8 yuan per cubic meter.

"We guarantee that 80 percent of the households will not pay much more as their water use is under the minimum level. The other 10 percent will have to pay 50 percent more, and the next 10 percent 100 to 200 percent more," the official notice said.

"The authorities have to raise the price of water to prevent people from wasting it," said Yang Jinwen, an engineer at Energy de France. "China's water resources are scarce – far short of the country's actual needs."



Beijing TV introduces its new streaming platform.

BQB Photo

# Beijing TV opens on-demand streaming service

By ZHAO HONGYI  
Beijing Today Staff

Beijing Radio & TV Network (BRTN), a new on-demand video service for the capital, came online last week.

The service allows viewers to watch any programs aired during the last seven days using the BRTN app, available for smart phones and tablets at the company's website brtn.com.cn.

BRTN was established in June 2010 as a cooperation between Beijing TV and 18 lower institutions. The service collects media programs and makes them available on the Internet, as well as enables the scheduling of future broadcasts.



# Middle class begins a Tier-1 exodus

By ANNIE WEI  
Beijing Today staff

Wang Chong sits in a "hip" cafe alongside the manmade lake in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

At first glance he seems no different from the other young people in the cafe. In truth, he's a new immigrant.

Wang was born in 1982 in Shandong Province and moved to Beijing in 2002 to study and work as a screenwriter. Last April, he moved to Nanning to take a job as a screenwriter at the local Guangxi TV Station.

"Beijing bored me and its air was terrifying," Wang says. After a bout with leukemia, he decided the city had given him enough cancer.

He has adapted well to life down south. His base salary is 3,000 yuan and each episode he writes earns him an additional 6,000 yuan. He is required to turn in two episodes every month. He is also freelancing with a few of his previous contacts.

Wang's 75-square-meter apartment in the city's most upscale area costs only 1,800 yuan per month.

Sitting next to Wang is Lang Ge, a former Beijinger who is about to turn 50. Lang made his fortune off of an IPO before IPOs were fashionable. He keeps two large apartments in downtown Beijing but lives in Nanning with his mother.

Lang originally came to the city because of work; he stayed because it was comfortable.

"For me, the fun of life in Beijing was long gone," Lang says. An avid outdoorsman, the capital's choking pollution and chaotic crowds are at odds with Wang's dream of a mountain home.

"I like it here. I live in the newly-developed area where you can still access anything you would have had in Beijing," Lang says.

The last decade of economic boom has not been limited to Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. Smaller cities all over the country have developed rapidly.

Almost every cityscape is dotted with similar real estate projects and big malls selling Starbucks, Zara, H&M, Louis Vuitton and Sephora. Big-screen cineplexes abound.

Qin Li, 36, who worked in Beijing for a decade and married a local man, decided to sell her apartment and persuaded him to move with her to Nanning.

"We still spend a couple months in Beijing every year to see family and friends," Qin says.

For her, the decision to move was easy. "I felt my life had reached a different phase. I wanted to leave the hectic capital and move back to take care my family and prepare for having a baby," she says.

Qin is socialite with a wide network in both Beijing and Nanning.

"People like us make friends quickly. With life and work experience in the big cities, it's even easier," she says.

Wang, Lang and Qin are part of a new trend of middle-class workers who are abandoning metropolises for relaxing lifestyles and better business opportunities.

Steven Chen, the man behind Tianjin's most popular lounge Le Procope, was ambitious about introducing capital's dining and nightlife scenes to Tianjin.

"The middle-class and well-off people here don't have that many entertainment options," Chen says.



Performance art gets unusual stares in more conservative areas of Chongqing.

With rent, supply and labor costs skyrocketing in the capital, turning a profit is almost impossible and the competition is intense, Chen says.

Smaller cities have lower rent and salary requirements, but are typically willing to spend as much as in Beijing, meaning almost every business can be profitable, he says.

"You don't even need to look for new ideas or design a new club or restaurant," Chen says. "You go to Beijing, check out what might fit the Tianjin market, and localize it."

Wang Yajun, 34, editor-in-chief of Tianjin's luxury lifestyle magazine *Elegency*, agreed that successful locals are eager to spend on anyone who brings them a piece of the Beijing scene.

The magazine hosts an annual party that brings together government workers, private entrepreneurs, starving artists and polo players.

Last Wednesday, its sixth anniversary was held at the Tianjin Ritz-Carlton, created by the Tianjin government's 2.1 billion yuan investment. The government lauds it as the most expensive Ritz-Carlton in the world.

"We do not just gather people who like partying, but people who contribute to the city's economic and cultural development," Wang says.

Beijing and Tianjin have grown closer over the last decade. Many of Wang's former colleagues and friends have moved to Beijing to seek their dreams.

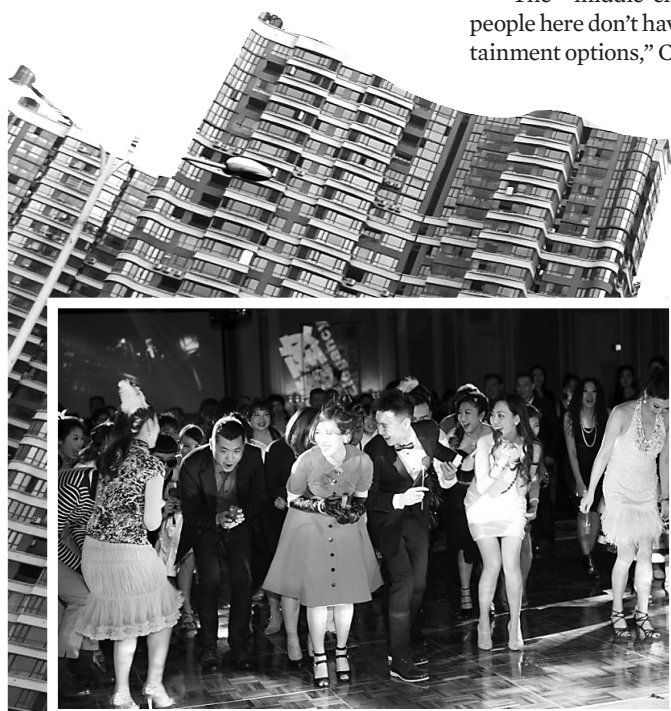
Others bought houses in Beijing a decade ago but still keep their life's focus in Tianjin.

"I like Beijing and its cultural scene, but it will never be my home," Wang says.

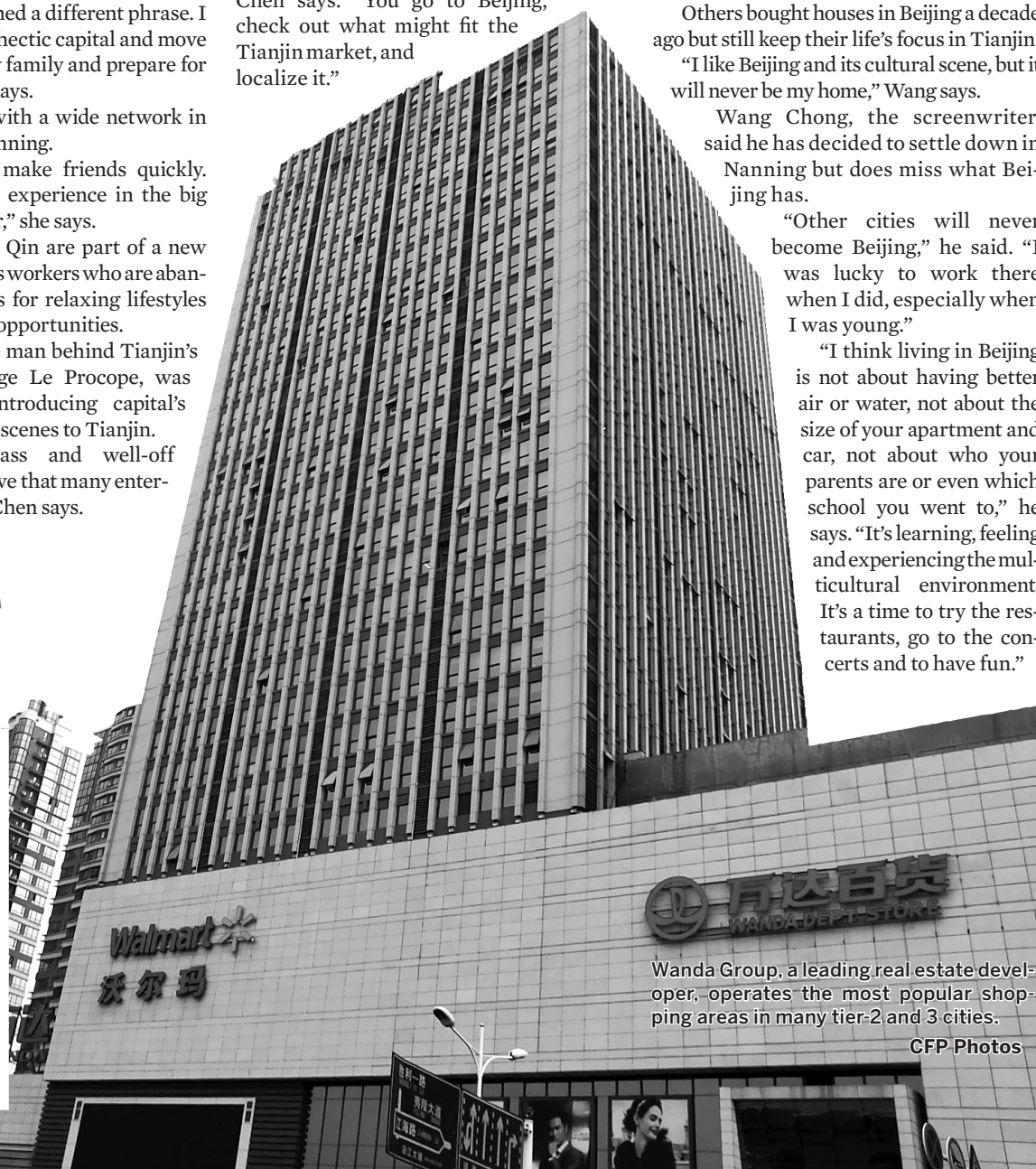
Wang Chong, the screenwriter, said he has decided to settle down in Nanning but does miss what Beijing has.

"Other cities will never become Beijing," he said. "I was lucky to work there when I did, especially when I was young."

"I think living in Beijing is not about having better air or water, not about the size of your apartment and car, not about who your parents are or even which school you went to," he says. "It's learning, feeling and experiencing the multicultural environment. It's a time to try the restaurants, go to the concerts and to have fun."



Elegency magazine's anniversary party in Tianjin



Wanda Group, a leading real estate developer, operates the most popular shopping areas in many tier-2 and 3 cities.

CFP Photos

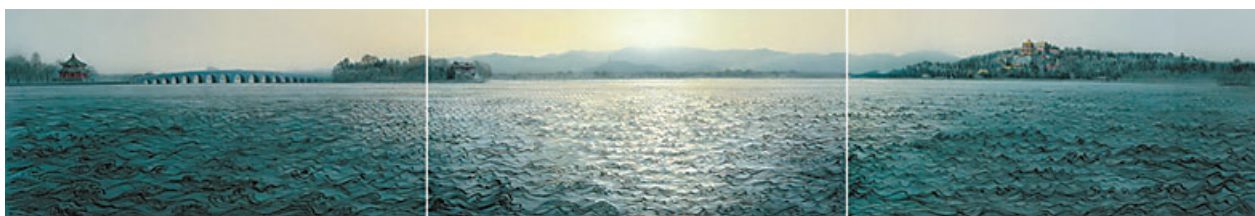


# Profound nostalgia fo

By ZHAO HONGYI

Beijing Today Staff

Spring Festival 2014 begins on January 31. Each year  
In the run up to the festival, two galleries are displ



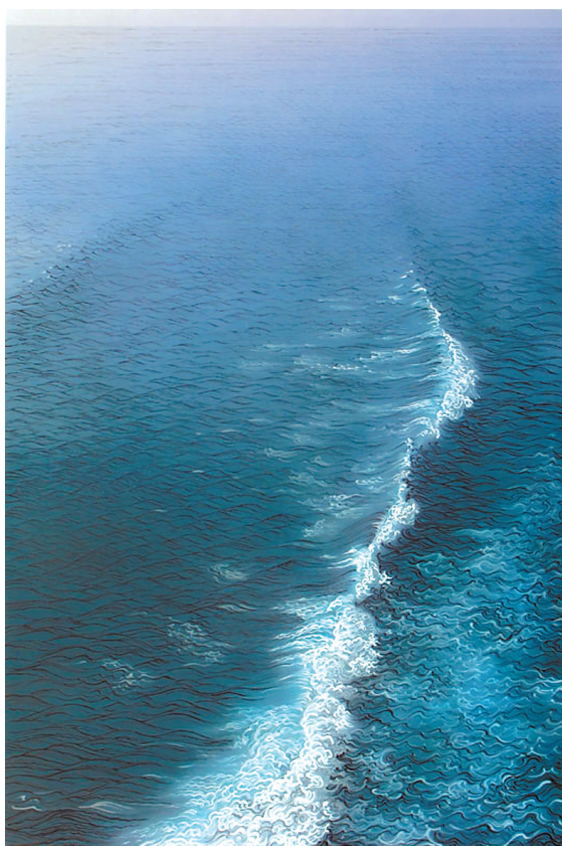
Sunset at the Old Summer Palace I



Snowscape



Spring Blossom



Water III, acrylic on canvas

Photos provided by Beyond Art Space



Snow Circle, acrylic on canvas



Cao Jinping

## The scenery of Cao Jinping

Cao Jinping was born in Chongqing 1972 and graduated from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute.

In his art, Cao focuses on taoist philosophy such as Zhuangzi's Butterfly Dream to convey that all life is in fluctuation and the situation is often not as it appears. His simple lines capture the essence of reality without limiting its shape.

In describing his work, many curators liken it to the Japanese Yamato-e, itself a continuation of the contemporary painting style of the Tang Dynasty. But where Yamato-e depicts humans in daily life, Cao applies it to boneless bodies and landscapes.

Cao is an astonishingly prolific artist, having painted countless traditional scenes, applying his technique to modern, snow-covered landscapes.

He is especially fond of parks and temples, as well as sea waves and deep valleys. If paintings were audible, his would capture the sound of the void.

Cao splits his time between Beijing and Sichuan. He collects his colleagues' works at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute and works on his own unusual creations.

### Beyond Art Space

**Where:** East Street, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Bei Jie, Chaoyang District

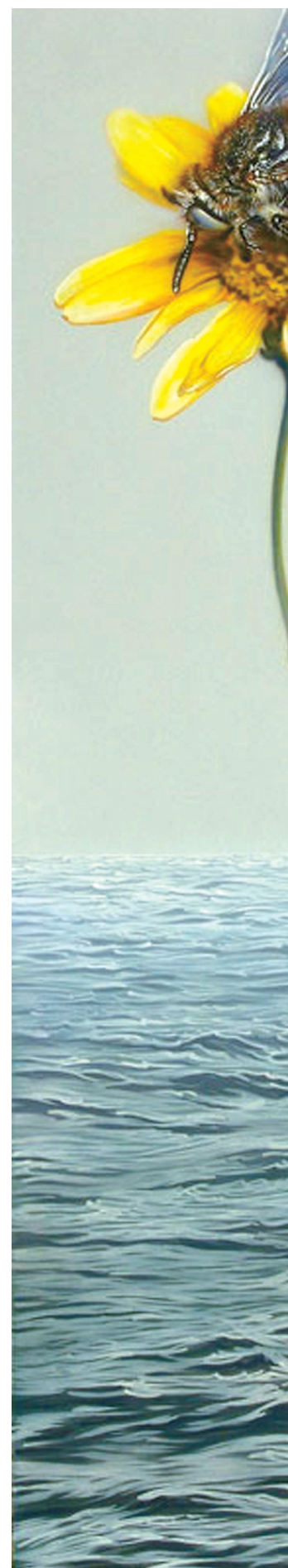
**Tel:** 5978 9561

**Web:** beyondartspace.com

**Email:** beyondartspace@gmail.com

**When:** 10 am-6 pm, Tuesday-Sunday, through February 28

Gone With the Wind VI, acrylic on canvas





# For a vanishing culture

ear's festival is a new opportunity to parade traditional culture and Chinese handicrafts.  
 laying a series of works that reflect traditional Beijing life during festivals and ordinary days.



Ma Haifang

## Beijing life celebrated in Ma Haifang's art

No one can doubt Ma Haifang's Beijing credentials.

Born in the city in 1956, Ma studied at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in the early 1980s and graduated in 1981 with a degree in traditional painting. Like many masters in his field, he has spent the years since working at People's Art Publishing House as a supervisor.

Ma obsesses about Beijing life. Each of his works capture daily life in Old Beijing and festival celebrations.

His art captures the spirit of a different, simpler time that has been lost from the modern city's memory.

Ma Haifang specializes in the boneless painting style, using moderate lines and, highlighting the shapes of his figures for modest exaggeration.

Almost all of his works include traditional couplets with proverbs or introspective warnings: messages such as "You don't drink tea to kill your thirst or play chess to win," or "Modesty brings good luck as virtue brings fortune."

Ma's subjects go about their daily lives, seeking shade in the summer under the city's old big trees. The Beijingers seem optimistic about life and enjoy playing with their birds and goldfish, appreciating trees and flowers or chatting.

Even people who never experiences Old Beijing can sense his profound nostalgia for the city's vanishing cultural spirit.

### Beijing Element Gallery

**Where:** East Street, 798 Art District,  
2 Jiuxianqiao Bei Jie, Chaoyang District

**Tel:** 5762 6172

**Web:** [gallery.artron.net/2440/g\\_infor2440.html](http://gallery.artron.net/2440/g_infor2440.html)

**Email:** [ma.art@qq.com](mailto:ma.art@qq.com)

**When:** 10 am-6 pm, Tuesday-Sunday,  
through February 15



Birdwatching



Theater Fans



Self Amusement



Looking for Amusement

Photos provided by Beijing Element



## 明式家具珍赏

王世襄 编著



Wang Shixiang's book, *Classic Chinese Furniture of the Ming and Early Qing Dynasties*

By ANNIE WEI  
Beijing Today staff

As people age, they typically invest in a couple pieces of delicately made hardwood furniture instead of IKEA's disposable designs.

For Chinese furniture that still fits modern life, minimalist Ming designs are the best choice.

The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) is considered the peak of Chinese furniture crafting, and collectors focus on period pieces made of rosewoods like huanghuali or zitan.

But Ming pieces have become expensive and rare since the first major rush that followed the publication of Wang Shixiang's book, *Classic Chinese Furniture of the Ming and Early Qing Dynasties*, in 1985.

Inspired by the greats of the past, a few design houses are making new furniture using ancient techniques.

On January 5, Zhang Yonghe, an architect from Atelier FCJZ, and Gu Yongqi, the founder of Yongqi Zitan Furniture, spoke about the new Chinese furniture movement at UCCA.

"I used to think people today could not make Chinese furniture that surpasses what people made in the Ming. I was wrong," Zhang said.

Ming furniture is known for its rich woods, simple designs and the intricate construction. Most are made of elaborate mortise-and-tenon joints that require great skill to master. The furniture is easy to disassemble but solid and stable while in use.

Gu said modern Chinese furniture designs have the advantage of new knowledge about ergonomics and Western aesthetics.

Gu and his zitan creations caught the attention of Chinese rosewood collectors in early 2000.

Unlike many people who compete in the rosewood furniture business, Gu did not devote himself to the craft until his 50s.

Gu was born to a family of craftsmen in 1949, and his junior high graduation coincided with the height of the Cultural Revolution. When Gu refused to go and labor in the countryside, he was thrown out of his home and forced to scrape out a living in the factories.

# Making Chinese furniture for the modern era

During the next 22 years he worked in nearly 50 factories.

He decided to open a small business when a back injury forced him out of manual labor at the age of 40.

"I've been working in manufacturing for many years and I know machines do a better job than human hands at certain tasks," Gu said. One example is in the shaping of mortise-and-tenon joints.

"In the Ming Dynasty, people cut all the wood by hand. Today we can use machines to ensure the cuts are more accurate," Gu said. "The better the joints fit, the longer the furniture can last."

One big challenges in making wood furniture is fighting thermal expansion and contraction. All woods contain nearly 45 percent of water when they are cut; after processing, they still absorb or release water from the environment. Gu spent five years solving this problem through a complicated mechanical process.

One of Gu's clients who was at the conference said he first heard of Gu in 1995, but was not impressed until 2002 when he learned Gu's zitan wood furniture could survive Beijing's temperature range and dryness.

"After 13 years, the three pieces I bought still look as good as new," the customer said.

The customer said he was interested in antique furniture and was visiting the

all hardwood stores in Beijing back then.

"The city had nearly 180 hardwood furniture stores and visited them all," he said, "None was as delicate in its technique as Gu. They really just destroyed those treasured rosewood shipped in from the Pacific islands."

Gu's furniture is not lacquered but looking shiny and feels smooth.

The shine is the result of his technique, which involves pressing wax into the wood to act as a barrier to humidity. The surface shine comes from careful sanding and moistening to polish the wood.

Gu also uses rattan plaiting in his furniture.

"It's a comfortable material and was widely used in Chinese furniture for many centuries until Qing Dynasty (1616-1912)," Gu said. "The Manchu favored more luxurious designs and ditched the Ming minimalism."

Gu said his home and factory in Nantong, Jiangxi Province have no antiques to serve as inspiration.

"The core of Chinese furniture is its joint construction. I bought a few antiques and books to study how everything went together and then made new designs the way I want," he said.

"I use new technology to make my work shine and surpass the past. What's the point of holding onto a collection of zombies?"



UCCA hosts a talk about the new Chinese furniture movement.



Gu Yongqi, founder of Yongqi Zitan Furniture



Ming furniture

Photos provided by UCCA



# Shop smart to live better

By ANNIE WEI  
Beijing Today staff

Japanese author Yamashita Hideko's book about managing your life by managing clutter has found new popularity with the release of its Chinese edition.

Titled *Danshari*, meaning "de-clutter," it promotes a three-step approach to reducing clutter: stop bringing unnecessary new possessions into your life; throw away existing clutter in your living space; and separate yourself from a desire for material possessions.

That's not to say it discourages consumption. The book instead encourages people to shop smarter and invest in quality products that last longer.

Beijing Today scouted a while and found a few multifunctional garments to help pare down your wardrobe.

## Cashmere coat

Quality cashmere coats are warm and light, and a well-made coat can be worn for life.

Life in northern China requires more than a piece of cashmere to insulate yourself from the coldest, windiest days. But quality coats are light enough that you can tuck them under a long, down jacket.

When it's early spring or late autumn, the coat and a sweater will be enough to keep you warm when outdoors.

## A sleeping bag

When you are still young and moving around between rented apartments, a good sleeping bag is more practical than most down blankets.

They are easy to pack and take away, and are useful whether at home or hiking. You can also unroll them when a guest comes to visit.

Just make sure to keep it clean.

## Good pillows

*Danshari* says a good sleeper can focus better at work, so investing in good pillows and a firm mattress is a smart choice.

## Black and white apparel

Black and white are always chic choices for fashion. That's not to say you cannot shop for colorful apparel, but your most expensive furs or leathers should be in black, as they will be able to be worn year after year.

## Rain boots

Hunter's rain boots are good for all weather. Wear them in the snow by layering your socks. The key word is "multi-function."

## Shop vintage

Beijing doesn't have that many truly "vintage" stores, but you can find quite a few on Gulou East Avenue or Andingmen Inner Avenue.



White and black tops



Vintage jeans



Vintage bags



Sleeping bags



Rain boots



"Sleep with me" pillows

CFP Photos



More sleeping bags



# Dining like the locals

By ANNIE WEI  
Beijing Today staff

We like to step outside the expat zone from time to time to find interesting restaurants and eateries.

This week, we tried an Old Beijing hotpot hidden in quiet Hepingli, a new Japanese restaurant and a family barbecue outside North Fifth Ring Road.

## Dining Out

### 23 years of quick-boiled lamb

You might think all hotpot is the same and only involves a random container of boiling water or soup stock.

It's not.

Shuanyangrou, the Old Beijing hotpot favorite, always involves lamb and a copper pot heated over a build-in furnace.

The copper and burning charcoal give the dish a very different flavor when compared to Sichuan's spicy hotpot. Dining around the pot gives families a sense of warmth and comfort, especially in winter.

The restaurant we visited is hidden in an old Muslim community in Hepingli. The owner, Ma Yanjie, has been operating the restaurant for 23 years.

While small, the interior is not humble. The menu has many popular fried dishes, but it's best known for its fresh lamb (35 yuan), delivered right from Hebei Province.

The lamb does not look as pink as it does in most restaurants. In fact, it was kind of dark. The waitress said this was due to machine-pressing the lamb to remove excess fat.

It also sells other classic Beijing foods such as baodu (20 yuan), boiled and sliced tripe flavored with sesame paste and other condiments. Most people value baodu for its chewiness and freshness.

Madoufu (18 yuan) is another traditional dish made with mung bean pulp stir-fried with mutton fat and tossed with dried chilies, yellow soybeans and preserved vegetables.

#### Laobeijing Qingzhen Yanshunzhai

**Where:** South side of Building 5, Xinghua Xi Li, Hepingli, Dongcheng District (take Exit A from Hepingli Beijie station on Line 5 and walk west 200 meters, then enter the gate of the residential compound on your right.)

**Open:** 11 am – 3 pm; 5 – 10 pm

**Tel:** 6421 3317



Shuanyangrou at a small eatery costs only 75 yuan per person with beer.



Clams and chicken stew are inexpensive at Baxiwei.

CFP Photos



Korean barbecue can be an easy home dinner.



## Izakaya Baxiwei

There are many izakayas offering fine sake and decent food to the capital's sizable Japanese population.

Baxiwei, a chained that opened last year, has quickly expanded with a few outlets in the eastern part of Beijing.

The izakaya is most busy at night, but always offers comfortable and relaxing ambiance with reasonably priced food.

Sashimi starts from 28 yuan, with expensive ones starting from 260 yuan. Sushi begins at 8 yuan for a cucumber roll and climbs to 25 to 35 yuan for more popular orders. Yakitori is priced from 2 yuan for onion, with a set of four chicken pieces and king crab leg at 158 yuan.

Finish the meal with a bowl of plain rice (3 yuan) or a noodle dish (22 yuan).

The restaurant has tatami seating with low tables or chairs by the bar.

Staff won't pressure you to order more, so it's a nice place to eat what you like and spend time with friends.

#### Baxiwei

**Where:** South gate of Gaojiayuan Erqu, Jiangtai Lu, Chaoyang District

**Open:** 11 am – 2:30 pm; 5:30 pm – late

**Tel:** 6431 9866

## Made from the Market

### DIY a stovetop Korean barbecue

Korean barbecue's grilled and juicy meats are hearty and comforting.

But you don't need to make a special appointment to meet your friends for a night out in Wangjing: you can easily make your own at home.

The secret is getting an imported Korean marble-square grill plate.

The marble grilling surfaces are a new non-stick technology, and most are priced between 100 and 200 yuan on Taobao.

Drop the marble on your stovetop, open the flame and you're ready to grill. The grill plates used in most Korean homes have a small hole that allows oil to drain while cooking. Place some kitchen tissue under it for easy cleanup.

Homemade barbecue is very easy. With a basket of lettuce or mushrooms, some good cuts of beef and pork, kimchi, steamed rice and beer, you can easily prepare a delightful meal.

The quick preparation and easy cleanup means you get to spend more time with your loved ones.

#### Where to shop

For a marble-coated or square grill plate, try Taobao.

Find the best meat at the Sanyuanli food market or Guoshuhao, a new food chain with outlets at Fulicheng and Wangjing. Its website is wgny.com.cn.